



STATE OF CONNECTICUT **NEWS RELEASE**

Consumer Counsel Mary J. Healey

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2005

OCC Files Petition with the DPUC to Investigate Decline in Household Telephone Service in Connecticut

The Office of Consumer Counsel filed a petition yesterday with the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) asking it to investigate the decline in the percentage of households in Connecticut with telephone service. The need for an inquiry is based on a May 2005 report issued by the Federal Communications Commission. The FCC report shows a stark decline in the percentage of households in Connecticut with telephone service. Specifically, Connecticut has experienced a decline in the percentage of homes with telephone service of 5.4% in just the past year (from 98.1% to 92.7%). Viewing the numbers another way, the FCC Report indicates that the number of homes without telephone service has increased from 1.9% to 7.3% in the past year, a surprising result.

The OCC notes in its petition that the statistical decline in home telephone service is likely not linked to the increased usage of cellular telephones. The Census Bureau survey upon which the FCC report is based included cellular telephone service in the definition of home telephone usage.

The potential harms from the lack of universal telephone service for residents are obvious and significant. Without telephone service, residents will, among other things, not have access to emergency services such as 9-1-1, which obviously creates a dangerous situation. Also, Connecticut citizens without telephone service will have a limited ability to contact their health care provider or obtain other necessary information. For these reasons, the Connecticut Legislature has already declared in law that it is a goal of the State to ensure the universal availability and accessibility of high quality, affordable telecommunications services to all residents and businesses in the state. Incredibly, Connecticut in the past year appears to be moving in the opposite direction.

According to Consumer Counsel Mary Healey, "it is unthinkable that, after decades of efforts to ensure universal telephone access, the number of Connecticut homes without telephone service is actually increasing. The DPUC

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should certainly investigate this phenomenon to determine whether the decline is actual and, if it is, to determine how to reverse the trend.”

OCC’s call for an investigation in this State is similar to a national effort by the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA), in which OCC is a member. On August 11, 2005, NASUCA asked the Federal Communications Commission to open an investigation into the national decline in the percentage of households with telephone service. The national decline in home telephone service is statistically significant, but not as steep as Connecticut’s.

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